



2008 GUIDE TO REFLECTIVE JOURNAL WRITING

PEOPLE TO PEOPLE STUDENT AMBASSADOR PROGRAMS

Your travel journal will require that you write in a style that we call “reflective writing.” You might already have experience with reflective writing, whether you’ve been formally taught the style or not.

When you write in the reflective style, you are writing about your perceptions and feelings of what you experience. You write about your expectations and how your experience compares to that.

Reflective writing is personal. That doesn’t mean that the topics you’ll be exploring in your travel journal are personal. You won’t be writing about your boyfriend or girlfriend or who you have a crush on here (you can use a separate journal for those topics). Reflective writing is personal in that you share your own insights.

For example, out of the two paragraphs below, which do you think is more reflective?

Example 1

Today I met my home stay family. They’re all being very nice to me, but it’s hard to understand their English. Their house is pretty small and they drive a really small car. The food is good, but it’s different from what I’m used to. They have two cats and some chickens. The bed isn’t very comfortable.

Example 2

Today I met my home stay family. I was so nervous. I didn’t know what to expect. Would they be able to speak English? What would their house be like? Would I like the food? But when I got to their house I felt relieved because they really were nice to me. Even though it was hard to understand their English, it was fun to try to find other ways to understand each other, like pointing and gesturing. It makes me understand that people are pretty much the same, even if they live in different countries and speak different languages.

You can see that Example 2 shows the writer’s expectations before the situation as well as how he/she feels. You also see how the writer’s perceptions change based on the experience. You see the writer’s new understanding.

Think About This

Here are some questions to think about when reflective journal writing:

- How do you feel about this topic now?
- How is this topic meaningful or important to you?
- What are some alternative viewpoints that you now have and/or what are some changes/improvements you might make based on the experiences you have had?
- What are some questions you still have regarding this topic?